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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1392nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 13 August 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. ALARCON de QUESADA (Cuba)
(Vice-Chairman)

- Special Committee decision of 15 August 1990 concerning Puerto Rico (continued)

- Organization of work

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Alarcon de Quesada (Cuba), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE DECISION OF 15 AUGUST 1990 CONCERNING PUERTO RICO (A/AC.109/L.1768 and L.1769) (continued)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Abel Nazario (Movimiento de Juventud) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I call on Mr. Nazario.

Mr. NAZARIO (interpretation from Spanish): I greatly appreciate the opportunity to appear today before the Special Committee entrusted by the United Nations with the task of eliminating colonialism from our modern world, a Committee which is today discussing the case of Puerto Rico.

My name is Abel Nazario. I am a young Puerto Rican, a citizen of the United States of America under the laws of the Congress of the United States, which in 1917 granted United States citizenship to all Puerto Ricans. I am a candidate for a Master's degree at the Inter-American University, and today I represent thousands of young Puerto Ricans who believe in federal statehood for our people. I am accompanied by Miss Zaida Serrano, from Carolina; Miss Carmen Ayala, from Dorado; Miss Ivette Meléndez, from Loiza; David Mojica, from Las Piedras; and Joel Quiñonez, from Rio Grande - all young university students and community leaders. The entire group is composed of young Puerto Ricans; and our task is to inform other young Puerto Ricans about the benefits of statehood.

We have addressed the Committee in previous years. Today we shall not merely be giving an historical account of our colonial problem - a problem with which members are already familiar - but we have come to demand that members of the Committee assume a clear-cut firm position on the case of

(Mr. Nazario)

Puerto Rico. The time has come to give an opportunity to the people of Puerto Rico to determine their own future, to choose their own political future which, without any doubt, will be statehood.

According to the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly relevant to our case, one of them has deprived Puerto Rico of any power - General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII) of 1953 which released the United States Government from the obligation of transmitting information to the United Nations on its possession in the Caribbean. Did the adoption of this resolution resolve the colonial dilemma of our people? No, it did not.

In 1989, the President of the United States, George Bush, made a commitment to the Puerto Rican people to provide us an opportunity, to which we are entitled, to decide definitively on our own future as a people, and the Senate and the House of Representatives began hearings and studies which have not achieved anything conducive to the decolonization of Puerto Rico.

Today, the plebiscite is a dead letter for the United States Congress, while young Puerto Ricans continue to be members of the United States armed forces, giving their lives in the Middle East in the name of democracy preached by the United States and the United States Congress. Today, young Puerto Ricans strongly urge President Bush, the Congress, the United Nations and the Government of Puerto Rico to hold a plebiscite in which, once and for all, we can decide on our definitive future.

Our situation today is unacceptable for those of us who believe in democracy. Accordingly, we are calling for speedy action by the United Nations to guarantee for our people the exercise of its sovereignty, in accordance with international law. Such action should be carried out immediately and supported by the will of each and every one of the members of

(Mr. Nazario)

the Committee. There is no doubt about the democratic maturity of our compatriots, but there is some doubt about the colonialist intentions of the great economic interests, together with the powers that feed upon and profit from administering the colony misnamed a Commonwealth.

We fully support any initiative which will give us an opportunity to make our voice heard in a free and truly democratic plebiscite. We are convinced that support for statehood will triumph by a large majority.

One last point; as can be seen, we not only defend the right of our compatriots to self-determination but also the political and economic annexation to the United States nation - of which we are citizens - as the most appropriate political condition in order to achieve political equality and dignity and to contribute to the common good of our society. Federal statehood is based on the principle of sovereignty for the people in self-determination, on the principle of permanent union, and on the principle of equal participation.

The Territory would continue to enjoy sovereignty under statehood because the United States Congress would renounce its sovereignty over the Territory, the Territory would acquire the sovereign power ceded by the Congress, and the State would agree to join the federal union, giving up the powers which were ceded by the original states in forming the American union.

We expect action from the members of the Committee and from the United States Congress. The right to statehood is an inherent right of United States citizenship, which guarantees us equal protection under the law, the legitimate right of the people to free themselves from colonialism and the opportunity to exercise self-determination.

(Mr. Nazario)

We, the young people of Puerto Rico, are prepared to work together with our families and our society to seek political and constitutional change for our people; we deserve it and we are capable of it. We, the young people in favour of statehood are patriotic - patriotic for Puerto Rican democracy, for our national pride and for respect for our fellow citizens throughout the world. We are patriots who believe in statehood, because we are all seeking the common good of the homeland, in different ways but with the same degree of patriotism.

Mr. Nazario withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Carlos Canache Mata (Deputy in the Congress of the Republic of Venezuela; Democratic Action Party) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I call on Mr. Canache Mata.

Mr. CANACHE MATA (interpretation from Spanish): On the first of this month the Venezuelan people endorsed yet again, in an agreement approved by the Delegated Commission of the Congress of the Republic its clear solidarity with Puerto Rico in its struggle for self-determination and independence. We believe that clear testimony of the sentiments of Bolivar's homeland are in the words which we have uttered here today in the Committee on decolonization of the United Nations on behalf of the three main political parties of Venezuela.

Very much in the spirit of the parliamentarian agreement to which I have referred, the Government of Venezuela, through Ambassador Diego Arria, yesterday submitted to the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to

(Mr. Canache Mata)

Colonial Countries and Peoples a draft resolution which reaffirms the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the applicability of the fundamental principles of that resolution with respect to Puerto Rico.

General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) itself states that it shall be applied to three types of territories: Trust Territories, Non-Self-Governing Territories and:

"all other Territories which have not yet attained independence ..."

(General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), para. 5)

It is on the basis of that last feature - the lack of complete freedom and independence - that General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) is applicable to the case of Puerto Rico, because in 1953, the year after the establishment of the Puerto Rican Commonwealth, it was dropped from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 66 (I) of 14 December 1946. This released the United States from the obligation which it had under Article 73 e of the Charter to send annual reports to the Secretary-General on its administration of Puerto Rico. When, on 27 November 1953, the General Assembly adopted resolution 748 (VIII), endorsing the suspension of that obligation of the United States, Venezuela - although at the time it had a dictatorial government - abstained in the voting on that resolution, since it did not resolve the problem of limited sovereignty, and voiced the hope that one day limited sovereignty would evolve so that what happened in the case of the Philippines would happen again in the case of Puerto Rico.

(Mr. Canache Mata)

Nobody now questions that General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) is applicable to the colonial-type situation of Puerto Rico, since the Special Committee in 1972 adopted a resolution according to which, the Special Committee,

"having considered the question of the list of Territories to which the Declaration is applicable, recognize as the inalienable right of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence, in conformity with resolution 1514 (XV)".

Now the attempt to torpedo the development of limited sovereignty that blocks the political horizon of Puerto Rico has taken other forms. There is the recent defeat of United States Congress draft laws which would have put in the hands of the Puerto Rican people themselves the decision on their political status. A study group of the General Accounting Office, in a report made in June this year, defines Puerto Rico as one of the five unincorporated territories governed under the territorial clause of the United States Constitution.

(Mr. Canache Mata)

The Attorney-General of the United States has testified before Congress that the Government maintains the view that Puerto Rico is under the sovereignty of the United States and subject to the territorial clause of the Constitution.

All this is taking place at a time when the political status of Puerto Rico is being widely discussed. Even The New York Times in April this year went so far as to say that while Puerto Rico was not the Lithuania of the United States, "the right of Puerto Rico to self-determination was fundamental and indisputable". We also wish to refer to the decision taken in April this year by the Legislative General Assembly of Puerto Rico to declare Spanish as the official language of Puerto Rico; this is properly a new affirmation of the Latin American identity of its people and, as declared by Octavio Paz, a very significant act of linguistic independence. And here in this Special Committee we meet in August each year, ambassadors and guests, in a special and moving ritual, to voice the prayer that light from heaven may eventually shine on Puerto Rico.

After freeing peoples on continental soil, Simón Bolivar at one point wanted to set sail and bring independence to Puerto Rico.

With the passage of time, the people of Puerto Rico have witnessed a change from one type of dependency to another.

There remains the hope that since darkness cannot go on forever it will inevitably end.

Mr. Canache Mata withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Freddy Muñoz (Venezuelan Movement to Socialism (MAS)) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I now call on Mr. Muñoz.

Mr. MUÑOZ (interpretation from Spanish): I am attending this meeting of the Committee on decolonization of the United Nations on behalf of my party, the Venezuelan Movement to Socialism (MAS). This is a great honour for me. But I am also doing so together with Deputy Carlos Canache Mata, who has just spoken, of the Democratic Action Party, and Deputy Gustavo Tarre Briceño, of the Christian Social Party (COPEI), pursuant to a decision of the Delegated Commission of the Congress of the Republic of Venezuela.

Our presence here, of course, is an expression of solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico. But I must say that the taking of a position on the question of Puerto Rico is not, for Venezuelans, just a question of solidarity - politically and morally. Basically it is an issue that relates to our national interests, if we consider them from a broad perspective.

This is so for one basic reason: Puerto Rico is part of Latin America. There are more than enough reasons to say this - reasons having to do with history, language, culture and shared struggles. These reasons have undoubtedly been confirmed on the occasion of the adoption by the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico this year of a law making Spanish the official language of the country. Since language represents a fundamental manifestation of national identity, this decision by the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico is a clear-cut affirmation of the Latin American identity of that nation.

Recognizing Puerto Rico as part of Latin America is the fundamental basis of every struggle that has been carried out in our countries to help ensure that Puerto Rico overcomes its colonial status once and for all and to uphold the right to self-determination of its people.

(Mr. Muñoz)

The fullest exercise of the right of self-determination results in independence. Hence, from our point of view, the call for self-determination of the people of the island is essentially a call for independence. At specific times throughout history this people has spoken out, under strong political and cultural conditioning, in favour of other institutional forms of existence. But that fact is not enough to override the fundamental reasons for achieving independence or the legitimacy of the struggle to achieve it.

In one way or another significant progress has been achieved through a complex process of efforts in the United Nations, in defining the principles concerning the right of the Puerto Rican people and other colonial peoples to enjoy the right to self-determination and independence, the highest expression of which is General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the successive decisions taken by the Committee on decolonization on the applicability of that resolution to the case of Puerto Rico.

But it must be recognized that, following upon a course of interactions between the Puerto Rican society, the international community and the authorities in the United States, we have now arrived at a time of stagnation. The process in the United States Congress with a view to arranging for a consultation of the people of Puerto Rico on the future institutional status of the country has become paralysed. Although we are aware of the interests that have prevailed in order to bring that about, we wish here merely to record the fact.

In these circumstances, we believe that the Special Committee must categorically reaffirm, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), the right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence; similarly, it must promote the resumption of the process that has been interrupted, with a view to laying the legal

(Mr. Muñoz)

foundations to ensure that the people of Puerto Rico can exercise this fundamental right effectively and without any interference.

I wish to add that the draft resolution submitted to the Committee by the Ambassador of Venezuela, Mr. Diego Arria, represents a well-balanced version of what, in the present circumstances, should be adopted with a view to opening up the way towards practical solutions to the Puerto Rican problem in accordance with the principles defined long ago by the United Nations.

Mr. Muñoz withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Gustavo Tarre Briceño (Venezuelan Christian Social Party (COPEI)) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I call on Mr. Tarre Briceño.

Mr. TARRE BRICEÑO (interpretation from Spanish): I am a member of the delegation from the Venezuelan Congress attending this meeting of the Committee on decolonization in order to transmit to this important body the position of the Venezuelan Parliament.

An important political leader of Puerto Rico recently said the following: "A common strategy should bring pressure to bear on the United Nations to ensure that the United States Government recognizes the right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination". Puerto Rico has the right to propose that its existing association be expanded to achieve independent powers, in accordance with paragraph 9 of resolution 748 (VIII) of 1953, and also the right to propose that the United States Congress admit it as a state of the United States union. The Congress, for its part, has the right to determine whether it accepts the terms of a negotiated association, or whether it wishes to accept Puerto Rico as a state of the United States Union.

(Mr. Tarre Briceño)

In addition, the draft resolution introduced by the representative of Venezuela in the Committee last year indicated that

"in accordance with the best interests of the people of Puerto Rico, the dialogue should continue and ... legal measures should be adopted which will bring to a successful conclusion and, as soon as possible, a process leading to the self-determination of the Puerto Rican people".

(A/AC.109/L.1747)

From this, two fundamental points arise: first, that the Puerto Rican people is sovereign, whatever its legal or political status may be; secondly, the best way of exercising its right to self-determination is defined in a framework of rules that are absolutely clear and free of pressure and that will leave no doubt about the decision to be taken in the future.

(Mr. Tarre Briceño)

With regard to the first aspect there seems to exist a quite broad consensus, as is shown by the various resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Committee over the years. The people of Puerto Rico has its own identity, as can be seen from the most cursory consideration of its main historical, social and political features. There is no clearer example of what we are saying than the historical decision taken by the Legislative Assembly last 5 April, declaring Spanish as the official language for all departments, municipalities and public offices. In this way Puerto Rico reaffirmed its status as a Latin American people and took a far-reaching step in the sense that now development towards statehood would be very difficult. With regard to the language, as Octavio Paz, the Nobel Prize winner, said:

> "The language we speak is a reality that is no less decisive than the ideas we profess or the office we exercise. To say language is to say civilization: a community of values; symbols; uses; beliefs; visions; questions about the past, the present and the future".

From the juridical point of view, the framework of regulations to express the will of the Puerto Rican people about their future has been paralysed. The differences arising within the United States Congress postponed, as everyone knows, popular consultations on the political status that were to take place this year. According to what was said, internal political and budgetary problems exist, in addition to legal disagreements with regard to the draft proposals in both Houses.

These issues have struck at the right to self-determination established in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Until they are resolved, the rights of Puerto Ricans as a sovereign people will be suspended. The Committee should take this situation into account when it takes up any resolution for adoption on this issue.

(Mr. Tarre Briceño)

In this connection, Venezuela will honour its historic commitment to Puerto Rico. Throughout the years we have been firm champions of its right to self-determination. Thus, for example, in 1953 my country abstained in the vote on resolution 748 (VIII), recognizing the Commonwealth as an effective manifestation of self-determination. On that occasion, Venezuela explained its vote, saying that that was the exercise of limited sovereignty. In 1960 we voted in favour of resolution 1514 (XV), and in 1961 we voted in favour of resolution 1654 (XVI), setting up the Special Committee, which we joined at the very outset.

As we see it, the basic fact determining any discussion on Puerto Rico is that here we have a people in the full sense of the word. In this connection, one of the considerations under the law that established Spanish as the official language is clear:

> "The purpose of the legislation that is being adopted today is to abolish anachronisms and reaffirm our historical status as a Spanish-speaking people, freely associated with the United States. Under the strong political, economic and ideological ties that bind us to that nation, the people of Puerto Rico pledges to acquire command of English as a second language, but it is not prepared to surrender its language or culture, nor the fundamental prerogative to have its Government conducted in the language of its people, that is, in Spanish."

Hence, among the unavoidable aspects that govern Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States, note is clearly taken of the claim of a people to its own identity. It is that identity we are asking the United Nations to recognize when it takes a decision on such an important matter.

Mr. Tarre Briceño withdrew.

At the invitation of Chairman, Mr. Dhoruba Bin Wahad (Campaign to Free Black Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in the U.S.) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on Mr. Bin Wahad.

Mr. BIN WAHAD: The Campaign to Free Black Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in the United States is a Black group dedicated to the total liberation and self-determination of Black people in the United States. As such, we believe that the issue of United States racist treatment of Black people within its territorial jurisdiction is directly linked to and informs United States foreign policy, especially as that policy relates to the human rights of people of colour and their right to national self-determination.

It is our position, based upon our experience as victims of United States racism and premised on historical and documented evidence, that the political and socio-cultural entity known as the United States of America is a European settler State; that is to say, the United States of America was established as a consequence of European imperial expansionism, which began almost 500 years ago. The land the United States occupies today was stolen from the native peoples of the region we now call North America. Those native people were systematically killed, and those who survived European expansionism were herded onto "reservations".

Africans were kidnapped from Africa in order to work land stolen from the native peoples of North and South America, and an elaborate caste system of white-skin privilege was erected to maintain the economic system of chattel slavery that was so vital to the initial accumulation of wealth that has made the United States Republic a regional Power and the eventual world Power it is today.

The system of white-skin privilege is still in place today, and it has created a domestic colonial situation for over 30 million Black people in the

(Mr. Bin Wahad)

United States that concretely influences United States foreign policy in the third world. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Puerto Ricans living in the United States suffer almost the exact same oppression, discrimination and exploitation as Blacks who have resided on the United States mainland for over 300 years.

Racism circumscribes the conditions under which Puerto Rico is colonized by the United States and determines how Puerto Ricans are treated on the United States mainland. Moreover, it is racism that informs United States arrogance towards Asians, Africans, Latin Americans and native Americans and that gives rise to the assumption that the resources and territories of third world peoples and nations are the rightful preserves of the developed European nations led by the United States, and that people of colour must fashion their future in accordance with United States and European interests or suffer embargo, as in the case of Cuba, or invasion, as in the cases of Panama, Grenada, Nicaragua or Iraq.

Clearly, President George Bush's "New World Order" is a world-wide geopolitical arrangement erected upon the vestiges of European racist colonial domination; and the matter of Puerto Rico's status should be viewed not only as a question of colonial domination but also as a fundamental struggle to deconstruct institutionalized racism raised to the level of United States policy.

It is from this historical root of genocide and racist enslavement that United States policies towards Puerto Rico and the Caribbean have evolved, first, with the so-called Monroe Doctrine fashioned by United States President James Monroe in 1853, which established hegemonic United States domination in the Western hemisphere to the exclusion of European influence, and, secondly, through outright military invasion and annexation of territories formerly controlled by Spain.

(Mr. Bin Wahad)

In December 1990, at Hunter College in New York City, almost 1,000 people from all over the United States and Europe attended a three-day "special tribunal on the violation of human rights of political prisoners and prisoners of war in the United States". A distinguished panel of jurists and human rights activists heard testimony and reviewed evidence of United States political repression of national minorities, including the vicious repression of the Black struggle for self-determination and the Puerto Rican people's right to self-determination. The tribunal findings are of course available for review by the Committee.

However, we must point out that, were it not for the absolute government control of the United States mass media, the question of United States human rights violations and the existence of United States political prisoners would be just as important an issue to the United Nations as the hostage situation in the Middle East or the issue of self-determination for the peoples of Eastern Europe. The wall of silence surrounding United States political prisoners and the imprisonment of captive combatants from the various national liberation movements in United States prisons and jails, such as the 13 Puerto Rican men and women from the Puerto Rican independence movement, all of whom are serving long prison sentences, must be broken once and for all.

Because the United States has refused POW status to the Puerto Rican anti-colonialist fighters, claiming that it is not a signatory to the Additional Protocol of the Geneva Convention, the work of the Committee assumes added significance, for without international pressure the United States will never live up to the international protocols of human rights, especially those protocols that apply to the treatment of people of colour. We call upon the Committee to intensify its vocal opposition to the continued United States occupation of Puerto Rico and to call for the unconditional withdrawal of United States troops from the island.

(Mr. Bin Wahad)

We, as a race of people thorougly dominated by a racist culture, understand that without vocal international pressure the United States will continue its blatant disregard for the rights of the Puerto Rican people and define their disregard as "democracy in action". Our experience as a people provides us with considerable understanding of the ingenious moral deception practised by the United States Government. For example, the United States has been so effective in masking its racist domination of Black people that the world at large has little understanding of the history of Black people in the United States or how we are completely without political power or economic independence and how the relationship between the Black community and the United States and the mainstream white society is in fact a unique colonial relationship, a form of colonization that goes unrecognized even by the United Nations.

In concluding we petition the Special Committee on decolonization to intensify its efforts around the question of Puerto Rico's colonial status and to increase pressure on the United States Government immediately to release all Puerto Rican prisoners of war and political prisoners.

Mr. Bin Wahad withdrew.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Richard Harvey (International Association of Democratic Lawyers) took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I call on Mr. Harvey.

Mr. HARVEY: I thank the Special Committee on decolonization for allowing the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) the opportunity to appear once again before it and to articulate our support for the right of the people to Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence.

(Mr. Harvey)

Our Association was founded more than 40 years ago with the motto: "Law in the service of peace", and today we have member organizations in more than 95 Member States of the United Nations comprising many hundreds of thousands of lawyers, judges, law professors and students. The International Committee of the Colegio de Abogados de Puerto Rico is affiliated with our Association. The IADL has struggled constantly for the right of peoples to self-determination and independence, and we have always condemned the crimes of imperialism, apartheid, colonialism and neo-colonialism in all their forms.

In December 1990, Lennox Hinds, the IADL's permanent representative to the United Nations, participated in a team of special prosecutors who presented evidence before the Special International Tribunal on the Violation of Human Rights of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in United States prisons and jails. The organization of the Tribunal, of which brother Dhoruba Bin Wahad just spoke, was a truly herculean labour and was coordinated by Professor Luis Nieves Falcon, who spoke yesterday.

The members of the Special International Tribunal, drawn from Africa, Asia, Europe and North and South America, included a Nobel Prize winner and seven pre-eminent jurists. They assumed jurisdiction pursuant to accepted principles of international law under the Charter in accordance with the precedence of the Nuremburg and Tokyo Tribunals and following procedures approved by Economic and Social Council resolution 1503 (XLVIII).

The Tribunal found that of the four peoples represented before it, "the right to self-determination for the people of Puerto Rico is the clearest and most recognized by the international community. With a separate territory, language and culture, the plight of Puerto Rico constitutes one of the last remaining classic colonial cases in the world".

(Mr. Harvey)

The Tribunal condemned the refusal by the United States to heed the resolutions of the Special Committee on decolonization and noted that United States President Bush's call for a plebiscite acknowledges

"that the Puerto Rican people have not chosen freely their present relationship with the United States".

The Tribunal heard testimony which

"established a military, political, psychological, economic, ideological, cultural and linguistic domination by the United States colonial Power over Puerto Rico since the beginning of the United States invasion and occupation".

It held that

"the evidence also was compelling as to the use of repression against the national movement for independence, its leaders and organizations".

Such fierce repression has been a constant theme of United States colonial control, and the Tribunal noted that,

"today that repression continues. Eighteen prisoners of war or political prisoners are serving draconian sentences, exiled from their homeland to jails in the United States. The FBI and the grand jury system are used to investigate, intimidate and intern independence activists and supporters. Thousands of others have been placed under surveillance and on 'subversive lists' for their pro-independence sentiments. At present, more than nine independence activists and leaders face conspiracy charges in Hartford, Connecticut, hundreds of miles from their homeland."

(Mr. Harvey)

The Tribunal castigated as genocidal certain characteristics of the colonial conditions imposed on Puerto Rico. These included

"the enforced sterilization of 33 per cent of Puerto Rican women of child-bearing age; the economically forced migration to the United States of one half of Puerto Rico's population; the consequent deculturization of the population; and one of the world's highest rates of suicides, drug abuse and mental illness".

Aligning itself with the findings and verdict of the 1989 Permanent People's Tribunal on Puerto Rico, in Barcelona in January 1989, the Special Tribunal called on the United States Government, first, to acknowledge the political prisoner status of those Puerto Ricans incarcerated because of their work and militancy in favour of Puerto Rico's independence and to grant a general amnesty to all Puerto Ricans currently incarcerated because of their involvement in the struggle against colonialism; secondly, to relinquish the current powers the United States Congress has to amend and approve decisions made by the representative bodies and government of Puerto Rico; thirdly, to transfer completely any power the United States Congress or the United States Government may have over Puerto Rico to a deliberative body with constitutional character, made up of representatives from all the political and social forces of Puerto Rico chosen on an equal elective basis; and, fourthly, to negotiate such measures as a transitional status of the juridical and political condition of Puerto Rico until the self-determination right is effectively exercised.

The Special Tribunal further called upon the United States Government

"to accord prisoner-of-war status to those Puerto Rican prisoners captured as anti-colonial combatants".

(Mr. Harvey)

Our Association has repeatedly pronounced itself sceptical at the sincerity of the United States Government's oft-repeated intention to conduct a plebiscite on the future status of Puerto Rico. The history of those who seek to hold onto colonial power abounds with similar promises and proposals, from the puppet regimes through which racist minorities sought to retain power in places they called Rhodesia and South West Africa on down to the recently failed "talks about talks", through which the British Government sought to exclude its political opponents from the resolution of Ireland's troubles, and now the "talks about negotiations about talks", whereby Israel holds the world to ransom in its determination to keep the Palestinian people in permanent bondage.

As we and others previously predicted, the Puerto Rico plebiscite has proved to be no more than a mirage and the commitment of the United States to the protection of peoples from invasion and foreign domination remains limited to those peoples which it wishes to keep under its own domination.

We remain convinced, however, that by the forceful reassertion within the United Nations of the right of peoples to true self-determination, such cynical attempts at manoeuvring world power in the interests of one super-Power will be thwarted. Zimbabwe and Namibia are free, their peoples are sovereign. The African National Congress moves forward daily as a shining example to all of the ability of a people to act as one in creating a non-racial, non-sexist and truly democratic society. We believe that the peoples of Palestine and Ireland will also succeed where bigotry and colonial mentalities now conspire to repress their aspirations; for, despite the innumerable problems that now confront the peoples of this rapidly changing world, there is a new spirit alive in those peoples, and it is the spirit of resistance to foreign domination.

(Mr. Harvey)

The economic self-determination of the Americas has too long been subordinated to the demands of the economy of the United States. The economy of Puerto Rico has been deliberately subjected to the economic needs of the Metropolitan Power without consideration for the rights and needs of the island of Puerto Rico. The needs of the peoples of the Caribbean and Latin America are human needs and their human rights include economic rights. If there is to be a new world order of any sort, then it must be an order that outlaws such acts as the trade embargo against the people of Cuba and the debt enslavement of Latin America by foreign banks, which have proved themselves to be rapacious and irresponsible.

(Mr. Harvey)

As we have done in previous years, we once more urge the Special Committee to consult with the Secretary-General in order to discuss how best the people of Puerto Rico and the international community as a whole may be assured that the full provisions of the decolonization Declaration are implemented fairly and faithfully so that the people of Puerto Rico may finally decide on their own future without the undue political, cultural, military and economic influence of the colonial Power.

In the context of Puerto Rico, we respectfully submit that, before any free and fair exercise of rights can take place, the following minimum conditions must be met: first, release all Puerto Rican political prisoners and prisoners of war; secondly, drop all pending charges against Puerto Rican independentistas in the United States and Puerto Rico; thirdly, disband and remove all agents of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation from Puerto Rico; fourthly, abolish the colonial English-language only United States Federal Court in Puerto Rico - and I pause here to say that in April of this year the Governor of Puerto Rico signed into operation a new law announcing that Spanish is the official language of Puerto Rico; nevertheless, the colonial courthouse in old San Juan still administers law exclusively in English, a clear example of colonialism - and, finally, the United States must discharge all agents of the Police of Puerto Rico responsible for compiling the so-called subversives list and for other acts of colonial repression.

Mr. Harvey withdrew.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): We have thus concluded the hearings on this item. On behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf I wish to express appreciation to the representatives of the organizations concerned for the statements and information they have furnished to the

(The Chairman)

Committee, as well as for the efforts they made to keep within the time-limit, which was essential in order for the Committee to complete its full agenda.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I wish to draw members' attention to draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1769, presented by the delegation of Venezuela, which was distributed yesterday afternoon. The delegation of Venezuela submitted a revised form of that draft resolution this morning, and I understand from the Secretariat that every effort is being made to have that document circulated later this afternoon. I hope that that can be done and that the Committee will be able to take up this item once again tomorrow afternoon, hear any statements that members of the Committee may wish to make and perhaps take action on the draft resolution.

The programme of work for tomorrow, 14 August, will also include the question of Western Sahara, and in this connection we shall hear one petitioner. We shall continue consideration of the report of the Sub-Committee on Small Territories and resume the general debate on the items on activities of foreign economic and other interests, on military activities and on implementation of the Declaration by the specialized agencies, with a view to concluding debate on these items by the close of tomorrow's meetings.

Also scheduled for our meetings tomorrow is the continuation of our consideration of the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). Members will recall that we have already heard the petitioners on this item and that a draft resolution, contained in A/AC.109/L.1767, has been submitted. I suggest that we conclude consideration of this item and take action on the draft resolution tomorrow.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.